

AD-A174 231

The Main Pillars of Generalship: A Different View

by

Major John M. Vermillion
Infantry

LIBRARY
USA. CGSC FT. LEAVENWORTH, KS
NOV 06 1986
ACCESSION NO. _____
PO REGISTER _____

School of Advanced Military Studies
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

10 April 1986

DTIC
ELECTE
NOV 20 1986
S A

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE:
DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED.

86-3642

86 11 18 146

JTIC FILE COPY

The Main Pillars of Generalship: A Different View

by

**Major John M. Vermillion
Infantry**

**School of Advanced Military Studies
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

10 April 1986

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

**APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE
DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED**

School of Advanced Military Studies
Monograph Approval

Name of Student: John M. Vermillion, Major, Infantry
Title of Monograph: The Main Pillars of Generalship: A
Different View

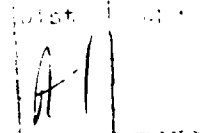
Approved by:

James J. Schneider Monograph Director
(James J. Schneider, MA)

Richard H. Sinnreich Director, School of
(Col. Richard H. Sinnreich, MA) Advanced Military
Studies

Philip J. Brookes Director, Graduate
(Philip J. Brookes, PhD) Degree Programs

Accepted this 14th day of May 1986.



ABSTRACT

THE MAIN PILLARS OF GENERALSHIP: A DIFFERENT VIEW, by Major John M. Vermillion, USA, 44 pages.

This essay is about the art and requirements of generalship, or command at the operational level of war. The need for such a study exists in that current leadership doctrine looks almost wholly at the personal attributes desirable in the commander. The paper comprises two main parts. The first explores the nature of the relationship between leader and follower, and concludes that it is in the best interest of the U.S. Army to permit operational commanders to select their own chief subordinates.

The second part of the paper examines the fundamental issues with which the senior commander ought to be concerned and knowledgeable. In the author's judgment, the general should pay special attention to carving out of his schedule time to think, to issuing simple, unambiguous orders, to decentralizing command at low levels, and to developing a tolerance for the unexpected and uncertain. Other major judgments pertain to delivery of force on the battlefield. The commander first must decide, and impart to others, how the campaign should end. Second, he must sequence actions to bring about the desired conclusion. Finally, he must be able to discern with certitude the fine distinctions between tenacity and obstinacy.

Introduction

There is apparently no end to the commentary on leadership. Barbara Tuchman has estimated that more than twice as much has been written about leadership, and the related categories of command and generalship, than about any other subject of military interest. The sheer volume of this material is imposing, and should cause one who contemplates writing yet another essay on the subject to question what more of worth might be said. An even more vital question is why readers should spend time reviewing old arguments by new authors. These important questions deserve straight answers.

Most articles inappropriately treat the subject of leadership as a generic entity; that is, they purport to offer advice which is as of much value to the general officer as to the platoon leader. Another common shortcoming involves the U.S. Army's tight focus on the personal traits desirable in its leaders; conversely, Army publications virtually exclude discussion of the particular talents the leader must hone. This essay restricts its attention to generalship, or leadership as practiced by general officers in combat. Stated differently, it is about the art and requirements of command at the operational level of war. The words senior leadership, command, and generalship, as used in this paper, may be regarded as synonymous.

A review of the state of literature on the operational level of war published within the past two or three years

suggests that the Army, or at least those writing on the subject, finally are agreeing on how the term ought to be defined. Working definitions of the concept generally argue that the operational level of war encompasses the movement, support, and sequential employment of large military forces in the conduct of military campaigns to accomplish goals directed by theater strategy or a higher level operational formation.¹

Just as the Army has been able to perceive more clearly what warfare at the operational level entails, so also has it observed that the requirements of leadership at that level differ in some important respects from leadership at the tactical level. Indeed, the term operational art implies that the commander at this echelon requires special talents. To identify these different, special requirements should be a matter of high concern not only to those who aspire to command at the operational level, but also as a minimum, and probably more importantly, to all field grade officers who might be staff officers at operational-level headquarters.

If it is advisable, then, to learn about the unique demands of leadership at the operational level, where does one look for instruction? The ideal circumstance is to serve with a latter-day Clausewitzian "genius" personally and directly. Commanders with transcendent intellectual and creative powers, however, are rare, so to have a chance to observe a genius personally is nearly impossible. A second

way, open to all, is through study of the sequence and tendencies of past events and the key personalities who drove them. The present essay rests mainly on this method. As a matter of plain fact, though, most U.S. Army officers do not read military history with a critical eye. The majority of officers look for a third way.

The Army has tried to provide the third way. By publishing Field Manual (FM) 22-999, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, Army leaders have recognized and sanctioned a distinction between tactical- and operational-level leadership. Even the most biting critics must applaud the hard work and serious study which obviously underpin the new manual. Nonetheless, the work suffers badly precisely because it is so unobjectionable. Every significant utterance on leadership seems to have found its way into the manual. It is full of lists, generally in threes. For example, the reader learns that senior leaders teach, mentor, and develop; that they must possess certain attributes, perspectives, and imperatives; and that they ought to possess three groups of skills--conceptual, competency, and communications. Subdivisions of major headings also commonly occur in threes, as in three types of attributes--standard bearer (read "example"), developer, and integrator.

By the time one finishes wading through endless alliterative lists of traits desirable in the operational-level commander, he has had drawn for him a

commander with the piety of a monk, the intellect of a William Buckley-Isaac Asimov hybrid, and the courage of a Joan of Arc. In short, FM 22-999 lacks focus and a sense of what is fundamentally important, not just important or nice to know. To say everything is to say nothing. The purpose of this essay is to draw sharper distinctions between the tactical and operational levels of leadership, and to offer a considered opinion about what characteristics seem to be most essential to commanders involved in the execution of the operational level of warfare. The paper opens with the contention that the U.S. Army needs to adopt a more rigorous and enlightened attitude toward its leadership theory. The second part of the paper examines the fundamental concerns of war from the operational-level commander's perspective. Derived from these fundamental concerns are what this writer regards as the most critical issues with which the commander must deal.

I. On the Kinship Between Leader and Follower

A false idea, namely that discussions about leadership need take into account the leader only, has spread throughout the Army and slowly influenced at least a generation of soldiers. As subsequent argument will show, this is a dangerous notion, and has resulted in unwanted second- and

third-order ramifications.

The word leadership implies that a relationship exists between the leader and something else. The "something else", of course, is followers. Unless there is a requirement to be led, the function of leadership cannot be discharged. Very little first-class work has been done to appraise the dynamics of leader-follower interactions. It is time to recall the words of the redoubtable Dr. Samuel Johnson: "Of an opinion which is no longer doubted the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practiced the first teacher is forgotten."^e It is time to examine the evidence regarding leadership in general and generalship in particular, then to hold the findings up to the bright light of common sense.

The exercise of generalship today carries with it tremendous difficulties. The size of the battlefield, for example, has expanded. A division today is expected to cover a frontage comparable to that assigned to a corps in World War II. For the general to travel around to his widely-spread units is more difficult than ever. As the numbers and varieties of machines and weapons have multiplied, so also have logistics requirements. The higher the echelon of command, the more the general has to be responsible for, yet the less direct control he has over subordinate forces. With the advent of night vision equipment and vehicles with longer ranges of operations,

combat operations can proceed unremittingly. Command functions combine into a process that is progressive and continuous. While a commander is exercising military command, he is responsible without respite for the effective and vigorous prosecution of the operations which will achieve his objectives and contribute to the execution of the overall mission. Obviously, no single man, unaided, can do this properly.

Clausewitz³, Jomini⁴, and Sun Tsu⁵, as well as countless other military thinkers have described the qualities of the true general. They unabashedly draw a portrait of Clausewitz's "genius", the general (remember that Jomini and Clausewitz were thinking of Napoleon) who possesses in "harmonious combination"⁶ the many intellectual, moral, and physical elements of soldierly perfection. Unfortunately, there are not enough geniuses to spread around. As Sir John Hackett, the respected British general, has written:

Of born or natural leaders there never seem to be enough. They will be too few for an army, that is, which seems to use about one officer to ten other ranks. There just do not appear to be enough men with a sufficient degree of betterness, in relation to their fellows in relevant modes, to throw up one recognized leader in eleven by natural selection.⁷

Field Marshal Montgomery echoes Hackett with the observation that "it will be unusual to find combined in any one individual all the qualities needed for successful leadership."⁸ As the tasks of the general in command grew too

numerous and too complex for any one man to manage effectively, the general staff system emerged. By the middle of the nineteenth century Helmuth von Moltke saw that the Industrial Revolution had let loose the powers to mobilize, equip, and direct enormous armies, and that this development demanded the creation of a complex and highly professional staff. In fact, then, "The General Staff was essentially intended to form a collective substitute for genius, which no army can count on producing at need."⁹ Clearly, generalship expresses a dynamic relationship between the leader and his subordinates, especially with respect to operational subordinates (e.g., Lee to Jackson) and staff subordinates (e.g., Napoleon to Berthier).

Upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt, Walter Lippmann astutely observed that

The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on....The genius of a good leader is to leave behind him a situation which common sense, without the grace of genius, can deal with successfully.¹⁰

Christ and His twelve Apostles exemplify the triumphant working out of Lippmann's notion in actual practice. Lippmann's law of leadership, however, applies also and most especially to generalship. The Army does not require geniuses, but generals solidly grounded in the fundamentals of their profession. With a wise selection of subordinates, the "average" general can have a successful command. On the

other hand, history demonstrates conclusively that some of its most acclaimed generals have failed when stripped of their "right-hand men."

Superior generals surround themselves with staff officers who complement them by covering their "blind spots." Consider the case of Napoleon Bonaparte, widely acknowledged to be the most esteemed soldier who ever led troops into battle. Some histories depict Marshal Berthier, the Emperor's chief of staff, as nothing more than an exalted clerk. Napoleon from time to time liked to speak publicly about Berthier in such pejorative language but this habit, regrettably, was a consequence of the Emperor's personal insecurity. Napoleon needed a chief of staff who would endure the waspish sting of his burning intellect, and yes, even occasional humiliation. The fact is, though, that Berthier's responsibilities were heavy, to such a degree that he often worked twenty-hour days. He personally controlled the division of labor on Napoleon's staff, all finances, and all appointments. Most importantly, he supervised the issue of all of Napoleon's orders regarding troop movements, operations, and artillery and engineer employment.¹¹

Napoleon was an operational-level planner nonpareil. Nonetheless, he needed someone with Berthier's energy, dedication, and retentive capacity to translate broad instructions into polished orders fit to be delivered to the corps commanders. Berthier had an exceptional talent for

drafting clear, concise orders. As David Chandler notes, "Bonaparte owed much of his early success to the administrative talents of Berthier."¹²

Only at the end, in 1815, did Berthier's worth to his Emperor become clear. On 1 June 1815, during the Waterloo Campaign, Berthier reportedly committed suicide, possibly because of his inability to tolerate any longer the rebukes of his commander. Napoleon thereupon was forced to substitute Soult, an able corps commander, for Berthier. Almost immediately,

Soult was to be responsible for perpetuating several mistakes and misunderstandings in the written orders he issued, and these, taken together, account for a great deal of Napoleon's ultimate difficulties.¹³

At Waterloo, Napoleon is said to have cried out, "if only Berthier was here, then my orders would have been carried out."¹⁴

Before leaving the Napoleon-Berthier example, several general observations are in order with respect to the dynamics of their relationship. First, it seems fair to suggest that Berthier was not flashingly quick. He was a man of deeply intelligent judgment rather than of brilliance. He was capable of making Napoleon's desire, if not vision, his own, of knowing how the Emperor wanted things to appear, then of being tough and stubborn enough to make them turn out that way. He would dutifully execute every directive concerning

an operation, but without adding a single idea of his own, or perhaps without comprehending the subtleties of the Emperor's thoughts. Now, ponder how suitably Berthier met Napoleon's requirements. Napoleon was one of those commanders who was so knowledgeable and so quick to focus his knowledge that even his apparently spontaneous reactions often emerged as intricate and fully developed ideas. That capacity can paralyze a staff. The interesting work of creation was done for them, and tedium does not stir the imagination. It is likely that many minds sharper than Berthier's, not just Soult's, would have failed precisely because the temptation to bring their fertile imaginations to bear would have been irresistible.

During the 1807-1814 reorganization of the Prussian army, General Gerhard von Scharnhorst ordered reforms many effects of which are still evident today. A regulation issued by Scharnhorst in 1810 was perhaps the most influential. He made the chief of staff a full partner in command decisions. By 1813 all Prussian commanding generals had chiefs of staff with whom they were expected to form effective partnerships. One of the most famous and effective of these teams was that of Gerhard von Blucher and his chief, Count Neithardt von Gneisenau. They were effective because they complemented each other perfectly. Whereas Blucher was a "brave, charismatic, but impatient man," Gneisenau was his polar opposite: cool, methodical, yet courageous and

determined.¹⁵ In The Politics of the Prussian Army, Gordon Craig speaks of the inspired collaboration of Blucher and Gneisenau:

Blucher, who recognized his own shortcomings and the genius of his chief of staff, relied implicitly on Gneisenau's judgement; and he was not wholly joking when--while receiving an honorary degree at Oxford after the war--he remarked: 'Nu, if I am to become a doctor, you must at least make Gneisenau an apothecary, for we two belong always together.'¹⁶

In contrast to Napoleon and Berthier, in this case the chief developed the plans and the commander executed them. The Gneisenau-Blucher model of teamwork remains the supreme example of its kind for the German army.

The American Civil War provides another illustration of the extent to which those in high command must depend on others for their success. When men such as Jeb Stuart and Stonewall Jackson were gone, Lee's generalship often failed. Thus it has been remarked that "without Jackson, Lee was a one-armed pugilist. Jackson possessed that brutality essential in war; Lee did not."¹⁷ Sir Frederick Maurice assessed the effect of Jackson's loss on Lee in this way:

Without Jackson's daring energy, tactical skill, and instant sympathy with and reading of Lee's mind, the combinations of the second Manassas and Chancellorsville were impossible.¹⁸

Not without cause was Lee supposed to have exclaimed at Gettysburg that if he had had Jackson he would have won a

great victory.

Soon after World War II, Field Marshal Montgomery was asked to enumerate his requirements for a good general. In response he listed nine items. The first was "Have a good chief of staff."¹⁹ And so he did, throughout the war. In his own The Path to Leadership, Montgomery referred to a good chief of staff as a "pearl of very great price."²⁰

As did all the generals mentioned thus far, Montgomery chose the men who worked for him. He insisted upon his right to install soldiers of his own choosing in all key positions. Shortly after Dunkirk, Montgomery described his plan to get the 3rd Division on its feet. He called together his staff and the senior officers in every unit in the division, whereupon he announced who was to take command in each case. He personally and unilaterally, without waiting for War Office approval, appointed all commanders down to battalion level. In Nigel Hamilton's words, Montgomery's

essential drive was to get the 'right man for the right job'...[this was] together with his unique ability to abstract the essentials of any problem, the touchstone of his genius as a commander. The conduct of battle had borne out how dependent a commander is on his subordinate officers.²¹

Montgomery tried to hold on to the same staff as he progressed in rank through the war; in this endeavor he was reasonably successful. The mainstay of most general staffs, but Montgomery's in particular, was the chief of staff. The

Field Marshal was fortunate to have had Major General Francis de Guingand serve him in this capacity for the better part of the war. De Guingand's comments about his old boss are intriguing, in that they explode the usual public image of Montgomery. According to de Guingand, Montgomery naturally tended to be rash and impetuous, not deliberate and wholly rational. The main business of his chief of staff was not to carry out detailed staff work or to make decisions in the absence of the commander, but to "keep Bernard's two great virtues [will and discipline] in tandem."²² When the War Office thrust an unwanted chief on Montgomery, the invariable result for the command was mediocrity or failure.

It is instructive to note that the single greatest failure with which Montgomery is associated, the Dieppe Raid, occurred during a period of flux in his staff. During his tenure as commander, South-East Army, his chief of staff, Brigadier John Sinclair, was, over Montgomery's opposition, transferred in March 1942. The commander then turned to the War Office with a personal request for 'Simbo' Simpson to replace Sinclair. London refused him not only in this request, but also in his bid for two other staff officers on whom he had depended heavily in earlier assignments. At this time he was denied the strong steadying influence of a de Guingand, and the predictable outcome was a too-quick acceptance of an ill-conceived plan. It seems highly likely that had de Guingand been present, he would have checked

Montgomery's essential rashness, a belief buttressed by the following sentiment:

There was...a fatal vacuum at this critical moment: and Bernard, as the one soldier--apart from Brooke--who possessed the undisputed prestige and authority to scrap the project, tragically agreed to undertake the raid.²²

The qualities and talents necessary to be a good staff officer are far different from those necessary to be a good commander. George Patton's career as well as any underscores this point. In the truest sense, Patton was a "general" officer. He abhorred involvement with details; indeed, few great commanders come to mind who acted otherwise. Patton was temperamentally unsuited to the role of staff officer. In two staff assignments he received poor efficiency reports for his performance.²⁴ The point is that at the operational level, no matter how brilliant the commander, the most glittering conception will go awry if it is not undergirded by the grinding hard work of his staff, as they churn out movement tables, time-distance calculations, and complex logistical data.

Patton demanded that he be permitted to select his staff. Although this mode of operation did not conform to the methods of the U.S. Army replacement system, Patton, for whatever reason, got away with making these decisions himself. When he arrived in England to assume command of Third Army, he shocked the staff then in place by announcing

that he was moving them out to make room for his own men. All those he brought on had served with him in North Africa and Sicily; most had backgrounds in Patton's 2d Armored Division.²³ As one would expect, he had an excellent relationship with the staff, making it a personal policy never to interfere with them on matters of minor detail. Like many outstanding German commanders, but unlike some of his American counterparts, Patton promoted an open and frank dialogue between his staff and himself. They did not hesitate to disagree with him. What was best for Third Army came first.

George Patton did not play hunches. He had the wisdom to rely on his staff for sound advice, and they consistently gave it to him. His G-2, Colonel Oscar Koch, for example, was felt by many to have the most penetrating mind in the U.S. Army in the intelligence field. Koch always had available for Patton the best, most accurate intelligence estimates to be found at any level of command. Patton's famous ninety-degree turn from the Saar bridgehead to the Ardennes has received countless well-deserved accolades in history texts, but seldom are we reminded that at bottom the action was made possible by a dutiful staff officer. It was Koch who persuaded his commander before the fact that planning should commence at once to deal with the situation which would arise if the Germans staged an attack in the Ardennes area.²⁴ Patton was served equally well by other

members of the staff. His primary logistician, Colonel Walter J. Muller, was known throughout the European Theater as "the best quartermaster since Moses."²⁷

The man who held Patton's staff together, Brigadier General Hugh Gaffey, has been termed "a staff officer of genius."²⁸ Gaffey held the post as Patton's chief of staff until the early autumn of 1944, when Patton sent him down to command 4th Armored Division, and eventually a corps. Gaffey's replacement was Brigadier General Hobart Gay, a longtime cavalry associate of Patton's. According to the historian H. Essame, "Both were equally competent in the exercise of their intricate craft."²⁹ Following close on the preceding statement, Essame uses an expression which recurs repeatedly in much literature about great commanders and their relationships with key members of their staffs when he remarks that "both were in the mind of their master."³⁰

David Irving suggests six reasons for Rommel's success in North Africa. One reason pertained to his good equipment, two to Rommel's individual talents, and three took note of the high-quality personnel who worked for him.³¹

Like Patton and Montgomery, Rommel "appropriated" his Panzer Army staff. Without question, this was one of the most remarkably competent staffs assembled in modern times. Siegfried Westphal, later a general officer in command, was the operations officer and a man for whom Rommel had the highest professional respect. F.W. Von Mellinthin, destined

to wear two stars before the war's end, ran the intelligence section. More than anyone else, Alfred Gause, Rommel's chief of staff, was "in the mind of the commander." He could anticipate with near-perfect accuracy what Rommel needed and when he needed it. Gause stayed on as Rommel's chief from early 1941 until April 1944, at which time Rommel's wife, as a result of a petty domestic dispute with Gause and his wife, prevailed upon her husband to release Gause. Rommel selected Hans Speidel to succeed Gause. Observe that in this instance, too, the commander chose a man whose temperament, intellect, and personality were nearly opposite his own. The highly literate, sophisticated Speidel was "a useful complement to Rommel's own one-track mind."²²

Kenneth Macksey asserts that personal obstinacy and miscalculation caused Rommel to throw away victory during Operation Crusader in November 1941. Several subordinates, Macksey claims, had a firmer grasp of the military situation than Rommel:

Repeatedly, it was Cruewell, and on one celebrated occasion Westphal, who made the vital decisions, while Rommel was pursuing an incorrect strategic line. Ironically, it was their judicious handling of tactics that further enhanced Rommel's reputation, as he gathered glory by a series of flamboyant exercises that were, for the most part, irrelevant to the battle.²³

The analysis in this section confirms the idea that a leadership theory which excludes the indispensable factor of

followership from the success equation simply does not jibe with the realities of military life. As obvious as this point may appear, it sadly is ignored with frightening regularity by those charged with preparing the U.S. Army's official pronouncements on the subject of leadership.

II. The Concerns of War

This section will attempt to reach some conclusions with respect to the requirements for generalship in combat command. How does one judge, with a sense of priority, what tasks the operational-level commander should be proficient at and what decisions he should be aware he must make? The first step is to distill as far as possible the essential activities of war. Such a distillation reveals that two things must occur. First, information must be communicated. This happens in a number of different formats, from the commander talking to his troops to issuing oral guidance to his staff and subordinate commanders to written instructions and operations orders. Normally, the process of communicating information culminates in a decision to take or to avoid a particular action. The second thing which must occur is the delivery of physical force by the instruments of war, that is, soldiers and weapons. By understanding in simplest form what happens on the battlefield, one is able to

draw further deductions with greater confidence and clarity.

A. The Communication of Information

As suggested, the communication of information, and its management, is a primary function of generalship, and can occur in several formats. Four components of this issue deserve the general's attention. Each of the following topics will be addressed in turn: (1) the need for the general to take time to think; (2) the need for simple orders; (3) the need for decentralized control; (4) the need to be able to tolerate ambiguity.

One of the difficult things a general must prepare himself to do in combat is take time to think problems through fully in order to make sound decisions and to plan future operations. Montgomery termed these respites "oases of thought." He believed fervently that the senior combat leader "must allow a certain amount of time [each day] for quiet thought and reflection."²⁴ He habitually went to bed at 2130, even amid tough battles. Patton as well as Montgomery made time to reflect and think ahead. Each lived apart from his main headquarters in the company of a small group of officers and noncommissioned officers. Each let his chief of staff become immersed in details, and never allowed himself to do so.²⁵

Noting that he had seen too many of his peers collapse under the stresses of high command, Sir William Slim insisted

that he "have ample leisure in which to think, and unbroken sleep."²⁶ His permanent order was not to be disturbed unless there arose a crisis no one else could handle. As with any other aspect of combat, commanders must train in peacetime to do well what war will demand. MacArthur and George Marshall gave this personal training their respectful attention. While Superintendent at West Point, MacArthur often worked in his quarters study until 1200 or 1300 instead of going into his office where he might be distracted. Years later, in the Philippines, he had a standing daily appointment at a Manila movie house for a 2100 showing. He did not care what was playing; he fell asleep as quickly as he sat down. He found moviegoing a convenient way to unburden himself, to undergo a daily psychic housecleaning. Similarly, during his World War II years as Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall usually left his office by 1500 each day, and rarely made any important decisions after that hour. Fully aware that his decisions could make the difference between life and death for large numbers of field combatants, he strove to be as mentally and emotionally prepared as possible to make good decisions. In short, periods of rigorously protected solitude are enormously important to the general in command. If the mind is the key to victory, the general must tend and exercise his mind with a view to its health just as he would the body. This recommendation is not often heard in the U.S. Army.

Combat orders express the commander's desires. History and common sense demonstrate that clarity, conciseness, and rapidity of dissemination are the measures of a good order. At the operational level the general must possess the power, derived from clarity of expression only, to knife through thick layers of command to be understood. Superior commanders at the operational level almost universally have been guided by a concern and talent for clear literary exposition. This does not mean that they must be able facilely to toss off arcane knowledge, but merely that they appreciate the strength of words carefully and economically employed. Space limitations will not permit a detailed treatment of this topic, but this writer concludes from substantial research that commanders who communicate well orally and in writing have developed this ability over long years of wide reading. Indeed, we may take as axiomatic the proposition that great leaders are great readers.

Conciseness and rapidity of dissemination go hand in hand. More often than not, the unit which acts first wins. This means that time and the saving of it should be at the core of the orders-generating process. Failure in timely issuance of orders is a cardinal error. Fortunately, the leader may avoid this error by following the principle that all orders must be as brief and simple as possible.

Many World War II commanders issued oral orders exclusively. General Heinz Gaedcke, a combat commander with

considerable experience on the Russian Front, followed the practice of most German generals in giving oral orders. In his opinion

To actually operate using formal written orders would have been far too slow. Going through the staff mill, correcting, rewriting, and reproducing in order to put out a written order would have meant we would have been too late with every attack we ever attempted.²⁷

General Gaedcke added that while serving in the postwar German army, he pulled out of the military archives some of his orders from the first Russian Campaign. He said to himself on this occasion that the new generation of officers probably would find inconceivable the running of a field army with such a small staff and on the basis of such simple, brief instructions.

It was a most peculiar feeling to see the orders, all very simple, that I had written in pencil so that the rain wouldn't smear them--and each had the radio operator's stamp to confirm that they had been transmitted.²⁸

The Sixth Army commander General Balck, whom General Gaedcke served for a time as chief of staff, declared that he could present a five-minute oral order which would last a good commander eight days.²⁹ When questioned after the war about his technique for giving orders, General Balck replied:

Even my largest and most important operations orders were verbal [oral]. After all there wasn't any need for written orders. As division commander, I forbade the use of written orders within

my division.⁴⁰

The clever commander will discover many ways to reduce the time it takes to communicate direct, unambiguous instructions to his subordinates. Working toward this goal should be a main objective of the operational-echelon commander.

If successful fighting units of the twentieth century have proved anything, it is that operations must be decentralized to the lowest level possible. Because the operational commander cannot do everything himself (in fact, he rarely will control combat units directly), he must delegate extensively. Commanders might profit from the example of General Grant, who pledged never to do himself that which someone else could do as well or better than he. He "trusted subordinates thoroughly, giving only general directions, not hampering them with petty instructions."⁴¹ Sir William Slim spoke for a legion of successful senior commanders when he summarized the compelling case for decentralization:

Commanders at all levels had to act more on their own; they were given greater latitude to work out their own plans to achieve what they knew was the Army Commander's intention. In time they developed to a marked degree the flexibility of mind and a firmness of decision that enabled them to act swiftly to take advantage of sudden information or changing circumstances without reference to their superiors....This acting without orders, in anticipation of orders, or without waiting for approval, yet always within the overall intention, must become second nature...and must go

down to the smallest units. 42

By decentralizing control to low tactical echelons, the operational commander implicitly places heavier weight on his overall intent and lighter weight on detailed orders, thus speeding up the processes of information flow and decision making. The benefits of decentralization are easy to identify. Nonetheless, many in the U.S. Army remain uncomfortable with the practice of issuing mission orders and allowing subordinates broad decision authority within the context of the commander's intent. Among many explanations for this uneasiness, a significant one involves the poor fit of decentralized control with present leadership doctrine. By turning the spotlight on the commander, by exalting his image to the neglect of the follower, the Army subtly and unwittingly has engendered the erroneous notion that the wheel of command will turn only on the strength of the commander. Saying this is in no way intended to diminish the role of the commander. He is still, and ever will be, the central figure in the organization. By virtue of his position alone, his actions set the tone and direction for the unit. He is not, however, the sole person in the unit charged with furnishing motivation and direction.

The final facet of the communication function with which the operational-level commander must be ready to cope is uncertainty, ambiguity, or "noise" (Clausewitz's "friction"). It is astonishing that anyone can perform well as a general

in wartime command. Very important decisions have to be made under "conditions of enormous stress, when actual noise, fatigue, lack of sleep, poor food and grinding responsibility add their quotas to the ever-present threat of total annihilation."⁴³ Even during the Iranian rescue mission, when some of these conditions did not exist, the sources of friction were plentiful and potent. The Holloway panel investigating the failure of the mission concluded that "the basic weakness displayed by Vaught's (the Joint Task Force Commander) staff" was that his "planners were not sufficiently sensitive to those 'areas of great uncertainty' that might have had a shattering impact on the rescue mission."⁴⁴ The goal is to be like Grant, "for whom confusion had no terror."⁴⁵ General Archibald Wavell claimed that the first essential of a general is robustness, which he defined as "the ability to stand the shocks of war."⁴⁶ The general, Wavell wrote, will constantly be at the mercy of unreliable information, uncertain factors, and unexpected strains. In order to cope in this environment, then, "all material of war, including the general, must have a certain solidity, a high margin over the normal breaking strain."⁴⁷ He can develop this toughness only by spending most of his peacetime training in the art and science of warcraft. One cannot expect to play a rough game without getting dirty. The Germans played many rough and dirty games during the interwar years, and as a result were generally better

prepared than their Allied counterparts.

B. The Delivery of Force upon the Objective

A second fundamental concern in warfighting involves bringing armed force effectively to bear upon the enemy. Force will be applied most effectively if the operational-level commander establishes, preferably before hostilities begin, the condition he wants to obtain at the end of the conflict. Only if he understands the end he seeks will he be able to prepare a clear statement of intent. No coherent campaign is possible without a lucid vision of how the campaign should conclude. Evidence suggests that planners sometimes do not tend to this crucial first decision, as the following account will show.

Students in the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort Leavenworth recently participated in an eight-day Southwest Asia wargame exercise. The pertinent part of the scenario portrayed an anti-U.S. rebel force takeover of several key cities in Iran, mostly in the southern part of the country. The rebels threatened to seize the Persian Gulf ports, and thereby shut down oil cargo out of the Gulf. Twenty-plus Soviet divisions from three fronts entered Iran in support of the rebels. In response to the threat to its national interests, as expressed by the Carter Doctrine, the United States deployed a Joint Task Force (JTF) to assist the loyalist Iranian forces. Ground forces consisted of roughly five and one-half Army divisions under

the control of a field army headquarters plus one Marine Amphibious Force (MAF).

SAMS students decided early in the planning that their mission, to defeat rebel and Soviet forces in Iran and to preserve the flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf, needed to be clarified. What was the defeat criterion? Restore Iran's national borders? Destroy all Soviet and rebel forces within the borders of Iran? Or should they emphasize the second part of the mission statement, to preserve the West's and Japan's access to Persian Gulf oil? Answers to these questions make a mighty difference. In the absence of a National Command Authority (NCA) player cell, the students judged that NCA intent was to assure the uninterrupted flow of oil. With this understanding, they concentrated on securing the vital Gulf ports of Chah Bahar, Bushehr, and Bandar Abbas. The ground commander (in this exercise, the notional Ninth (US) Army commander) determined that he would attempt to drive out, or prevent from entering, any enemy forces in an area centered on Bandar Abbas and circumscribed by an arc running from roughly Shiraz, Kerman, Bam, or some 250 miles away from Bandar Abbas. This decision made sense in three important respects. First, in the ground commander's opinion, the U.S. force was too small to fight much superior enemy forces across the entire vast expanse of Iran. To fight nationwide would surely deprive him of the ability to concentrate his forces at a critical point.

Second, with almost no infrastructure from which to establish logistics operations, to move farther than 250 miles inland would have been logistically unsupportable. Third, this course of action permitted friendly forces to exploit the excellent defensible terrain of the Zagros Mountains.

The SAMS students' decision is not offered as an approved solution. Rather, it is used to illustrate the importance of establishing the ends of the campaign. Shortly after the SAMS exercise, the students were privileged to visit each of the operational-level headquarters actually assigned a comparable mission. It is a matter of high interest and concern to professional soldiers that, when questioned about the ends they hoped to achieve, four headquarters produced four divergent answers. The reason for their differences was that they had never gotten together to agree on ends before allocating means and drawing up plans.

The next question the commander must confront is "How do I sequence the actions of the command to produce the desired conclusion to the conflict?" The short answer is that he must think through a series of battles and major operations which will constitute the campaign. He must weigh probabilities and risks and the challenges of battle management. This is anticipation. Good intelligence analyses will help him immensely, as will an in-depth knowledge of the enemy and his psychological predispositions. Still, he is dealing with imponderables, for if they were not

imponderable, there would be nothing to generalship at all. His next step is to fashion his thoughts on these imponderables into a convincing, coherent outline for a campaign plan. He presents his outline to the staff for refinement.

Although the commander need not be perfectly prescient, it helps immeasurably if his vision matches reality with reasonable fidelity. Planning at the operational level is tougher than at the tactical level because there is a narrower margin for error. The commander had better make the right decisions most of the time and on the big issues because once large formations are set in motion, it is nearly impossible to cause them to halt or change directions. As one of the most insightful commentators on AirLand Battle doctrine, Colonel Wallace Franz, has written:

Operational (large) units, once set in motion, do not conform readily to later modifications. There must be the fullest realization that any adaptation of means cannot be immediate and instantaneous. **

Like a member of a football kickoff team, the forces being employed at the operational level must move downfield at top speed with controlled fury. While charging hard, and under the threat of being knocked off his feet from multiple directions, the football player must be capable of moving rapidly out of his assigned lane of responsibility if conditions change radically, e.g., if the returner has run past him and is going toward the other side of the field. To

carry the analogy two degrees deeper, if all has gone well for the kickoff team, they will have disrupted the opposition's timing by clogging all eleven potential running lanes. When this situation develops, the opposition's set play collapses and the runner must freelance. If my team is much smaller than the opponent's, I have to rely on quickness, rapid thinking, hit-and-run tactics, and deceptive moves (all of which together define AirLand Battle doctrine's "agility") to give me the advantage I want.

Thus far this section has examined the principal what and how questions of the operational art. It is now necessary to look briefly at the when question relative to the transmission of force on the battlefield.

The eighteenth-century English neoclassicists believed that the antithetical forces of reason and passion struggled for possession of a man's personality. Reason they associated with the head and rational behavior, passion with the heart and emotional behavior. The Enlightenment ideal was the man whose reason held his passion in check. On the actual battlefield the same struggle constantly is being enacted in the mind of the commander.

Commanders are sorely tempted to allow emotion to cloud good judgment in decisionmaking. The art lies in realizing when and to what extent to let emotions intervene, to sense when it is proper to discard reason and turn to passion, to let the heart rule the head. Stated differently, the

internal conflict is between will and judgment. The force of will usually counsels "can" to the commander while judgment usually signals a "cannot" warning.

Nearly every treatise on generalship speaks of the tremendous importance of the will to prevail. The truth of this observation is so obvious as not to need stating. The flip side of tenacity, though, is obstinacy. More serious lapses of generalship may have occurred because of a failure to distinguish between tenacity and obstinacy than for any other reason. The general must ever be conscious of the true limitations and capabilities of his forces. As S.L.A. Marshall rightly expresses the matter:

The will does not operate in a vacuum. It cannot be imposed successfully if it runs counter to reason. Things are not done in war primarily because a man wills it; they are done because they are do-able. The limits for the commander in battle are defined by the general circumstances. What he asks of his men must be consistent with the possibilities of the situation.⁴⁹

The way a general understands what his forces can or cannot do is through what Sir John Hackett terms the principle of total engagement. By this he means that the general somehow completely fuses his own identity with that identity formed by the corporate whole of his men.⁵⁰ He reaches this state by being a participant in combat, not merely a prompter.⁵¹ In discussing the 1915 Turkish siege of British forces in Kut, India, Norman Dixon furnishes an

example of a general who was a prompter and no more. The British commander, Major General Townshend, stayed apart from his soldiers, holed up in the garrison at Kut. He had no sense of the true condition of his four weak brigades. As a consequence, his reports lied regarding casualties, food supplies, medical aid, and estimates of Turkish strength.⁵¹ In all, some 43,000 British soldiers needlessly became casualties because their commander lost all physical and emotional contact with his fighting troops.

III. Conclusion

Doctrine on leadership ought to talk about leadership in war. This is not the case with present manuals. Field Manuals 22-100 and 22-999 speak mostly about personal attributes desirable in a leader. The problem with so much emphasis on personal qualities is that even if the key ones could be identified, one probably cannot adhere to them all at the same time or all the time. Let us also not forget that one distinction must be kept clear: those commonly acclaimed as 'great' leaders are not necessarily good men. It is possible to be a 'roughneck' and still be a highly effective combat commander.

There is no simple set of rules by which to establish the pillars of generalship. One rule in any set, though, is that the good general must be adept at the art of choosing competent and compatible subordinates, especially his chief

of staff. A major contention of this essay has been that there are better ways to prepare the Army's senior officers for wartime command. First, the Army can modify its personnel system to permit senior commanders to select their own staffs. No solution is offered here as to how this might be done, but surely the devising of such a system is within man's ingenuity. This is a must-do requirement if the Army is serious about developing warcraft as something distinct from witchcraft. Every superior combat commander in modern times has relied on the brilliant staff work of men he has hand-picked to assist him. Surely there is a lesson in this observation. Chief executive officers of all large corporations choose their own principal subordinates. No university president in his right mind would attempt to assign the nine assistants to the head football coach, nor for that matter would any head coach worth his salt accept such a proposition.

The quality of the very great majority of today's Army officers is superb. The issue, then, is not so much whether competent officers will surround the senior commander as it is whether he will have around him officers who best complement him.

Second, senior leader leadership instruction should look carefully at what the commander ought to know and be concerned with. This paper has suggested one method to identify those concerns of most fundamental importance. That

method involves making the best effort to break down into simple components the infinitely complex environment of war. In the formulation offered in this paper, war ultimately becomes a matter of communicating information and delivering force on an objective. From this determination flows the judgment that the commanding general should pay special attention to carving out of his schedule time to think, to issuing simple, unambiguous orders, to decentralizing control to the lowest levels possible, and to developing a tolerance for the uncertain and the unexpected. Another major judgment relates to the delivery of force. Several conclusions emerge. First, the operational-level commander must furnish a clear-sighted vision of the conditions he wants to obtain at the conclusion of the campaign. Second, based upon an accurate understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the forces he commands, he must conjure up a sequence of actions which will bring to fruition the desired outcome. Third, the commander must be able to discern with certain knowledge the fine distinctions between tenacity and obstinacy.

In the final analysis, this essay argues that U.S. Army operational-level leadership doctrine must step away from preachments on the Boy Scout virtues writ large, and toward the requirements of wartime command. It also ought to abandon the idea that the general should and can master all the skills practiced by those subordinate to him; that time

has long since past. Instead, he should spend his precious time preparing to make the kinds of decisions war will require him to make, thereby strengthening the pillars of his generalship against the day they must bear the awful weight of war.